Santa Clara County

National Parks, Monuments, and Historical Landmarks

Written as part of the Federal Writers' Project, a Works Progress Administration (WPA) Project, 1936

Notes:

- Topics include:
  - Armistice Oak Tree
  - Old Adobe Woman's Club
  - Old site of Mission Santa Clara De Asis & Old Spanish Bridge site
  - Vasquez tree and 21-Mile House
  - Searsville Ghost Town
  - The Old Mountain View House
  - The Alameda Willows
  - The Eucalyptus Giant
  - Site of California's First Capital Building
  - Jefferson School Site, 1857
  - Spanish Hospice at San Mateo
  - Lick's Mill
- Various Authors
- Original in possession of the Santa Clara County Archives, San Jose, California
- Scanned by the Santa Clara Historical and Genealogical Society

Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society

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NATIONAL PARKS, MONUMENTS AND LANDMARKS

ARMISTICE OAK TREE

Located on 101 highway about two miles west of Santa Clara at Lawrence station crossing. Under the branches of this oak on January 8, 1847, Sanchez, leader of a native Californian band, surrendered himself with some American prisoners and arms to Lieutenant Grayson, who had arrived by boat from San Francisco with 15 men. Sanchez promised that property would no longer be seized without proper formalities and receipts. This armistice followed the Battle of Santa Clara, or, "Battle of the Mustard Stalks", which was fought on January 2, 1847 between Sanchez's Californians and 100 Americans under Captain Ward Marston. Total casualties were two Americans wounded and one horse on the Californian side killed. The Americans won a decisive victory by firing grape-shot at the Californians and chasing them into nearby foothills. Thus ended the last anti-American uprising in the Santa Clara Valley -- a revolt that was more of a despairing gesture against lawless acts committed under the American flag than a rebellion against the government.

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March 18, 1936

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NATIONAL PARKS, MONUMENTS AND LANDMARKS
OLD ADOBE WOMAN'S CLUB, SANTA CLARA

On highway 101 (1067 Grant street) one block from main street of Santa Clara. Oldest known adobe in Santa Clara Valley and one of the oldest in California; built in 1782 while Mission Santa Clara was being built on its second site. Original adobe walls and red tile roof still preserved although some walls around it torn down. Was first used as home for Indian women attached to the mission; later as Indian gathering place. Was home of a pioneer woman (Mrs. Pena) for number of years. She died there almost 100 years old. Then bought by Thomas Brothers who lived in it for some time and was very much attached to it. He told of standing in its doorway April 18, 1906 (day of the San Francisco earthquake) afraid to move either in or out for fear of falling tiles. Now used as headquarters Santa Clara Woman's Club. Has Indian relics, old hotel register and other antiques inside.

(Editor: No caretaker on premises, so not yet open all the time; likewise unmarked).

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March 23, 1936

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OLD SITES OF MISSION SANTA CLARA DE ASIS
AND OLD SPANISH BRIDGE SITE

CLASS II - HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

Present Mission Santa Clara is third built by padres. Site of first founded January 12, 1777; is crossed by Bayshore highway one-half mile east of the culvert under Southern Pacific Oakland railway and just before crossing Guadalupe river. The mission occupied fields that road runs across. To north of road in middle of field near a lone eucalyptus tree is concrete cross and marble stone commemorating first site mission and marking spot where old Spanish bridge spanned Guadalupe river. This site abandoned 1779 because of heavy floods and mission built again at what is now corner of Franklin and Campbell streets, Santa Clara, where a cross marks the spot. Cornerstone was laid in 1781 by Father Junipero Serra and building dedicated May 15, 1784. Church records state it was finest mission in California at that time. It was flooded and damaged in 1792 but rebuilt and enlarged, only to be destroyed by an earthquake in 1818.

The third mission was built on the spot where it now stands and dedicated on August 11, 1822. The present building is restored but is a faithful replica of the originals and with the original tiles on the roof. Two of the bells in the belfry date 1798 and 1799 and the third, and highest, is of the old material recast in 1864. Inside is the original great Mexican crucifix that is supposed to have spoken to Father Magin Catala and placed its arms about him. His body is buried at the crucifix altar.

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May 15, 1936

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(CLASS II - HISTORICAL)

VASQUEZ TREE AND 21-MILE HOUSE

One mile south of Morgan Hill on the right side of U. S. Highway 101 stands a lone oak tree. In the days of the last century this tree was a welcome sight to passengers, dusty and jolted in the old horse stages on the Monterey San Jose run.

Under the tree a famous stage station stood called The "21-Mile House", where horses were changed and where travelers could revive themselves with food and a bit of General Naglee's famous brandy. The station was only torn down in recent years to make room for a small stucco house which now stands on the old spot.

On a moonlight night a little imagination can conjure up the six horses trotting in with the swaying stage behind them, the driver with his feet braced against the dashboard, the reins wrapped around his hands. A 10 mile an hour average was considered "hell for leather" going in those days. Now cars swish by the old spot at a cool 50 with no need for a stop in such a short run as from San Jose to Monterey. Double-decker auto-stages, holding 40 people, are the modern counterparts of the old horse diligence.

Local rumor says that the notorious bandit Vasquez had a hide-out cave in Murphy peak behind Morgan Hill. When the tumult of pursuit had died away he would ride out and tether his horse to the lone oak, to go inside and spend some of his loot on fun and cheer.

Sometimes stage travelers would be startled at the sight of a grizzly bear tied to the tree, snarling and fighting to get away. The bear were lassooed in the ravines of the rolling Uvas district to be used in bull and bear fights, ~~the~~ a favorite sport of the time.

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CLASS II - HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

SEARSVILLE GHOST TOWN

On the Portola road between Portola and the town of Woodside lies Searsville Lake and a spot which was once the center for a population of 2000 people, most of whom have long since disappeared.

This was the boom town of Searsville which flourished from 1854 until it died out in 1890. It was a lumbering center for the cutting of the redwood trees which thickly studded the surrounding hills.

The town was located just inside the present entrance to Lake Searsville. Nothing now remains in evidence of lusty days but rows of eucalyptus and other trees which stood along Searsville's main street. On a little hill near the entrance a double row of cypress trees lead to where the schoolhouse once stood.

The county road during Searsville's existence ran through the center of the town and then across the valley at a point which is now covered by the lake. Some of the outlying buildings of the town were inundated with the forming of the lake, thus giving rise to the popular belief that the whole town was swallowed by the lake.

By 1890 the supply of timber was practically exhausted. The Spring Valley Water Company secured the site of Searsville, tore down or removed the buildings, and built the dam which forms the present lake. The water was to be stored and tapped by means of a long tunnel through

the mountains. Residents had to pick up and leave.

In its heyday Searsville had a general store, hotel and stage station, postoffice, blacksmith shop, and usual sprinkling of saloons. It had a schoolhouse and a church. When excavations for the cellar of the present Smith house across the road from the entrance were being made, a big deposit of rusting old tin cans was found -- a dump from the old hotel.

San Jose was largely built from lumber milled in this section. During the 60's and 70's long wagon trains carried the lumber from Searsville across the Sandhill road (which is now paved and runs from the Menlo Park-Portola road directly to the lake) crossing San Francisquito creek at a ford located at the site of the Roble bridge on the Stanford campus; then across the present site of the campus, striking El Camino Real (U. S. 101) at a point between the present stadium and Mayfield. One old native of Mountain View, where there was a stage stop, - the Mountain View House, - remembers the long trains of wagons pulling up in the dark to rest the horses and allow the drivers to have a little cheer within on their way to San Jose. Many of the present San Jose frame houses have Searsville wood in their walls.

Searsville lake and the property around was later bought by Stanford and used as a reservoir for water to irrigate the lawns and trees of the campus. It was not

used for drinking purposes.

The lake is now a resort (swimming, boating, hiking, and picnicing);admission 25¢, under the management of Ernst Bransten, ex-swimming and diving coach of Stanford University.

CONSULTANTS:

Guy Miller, Palo Alto - (Historian)

Roscoe D. Wyatt, Redwood City Chamber of Commerce

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American Guide
District #9

April 14, 1936

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CLASS II - HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

THE OLD MOUNTAIN VIEW HOUSE

Before the railroad was built from San Francisco to San Jose - (completed to San Jose January 16, 1864) - travel between these two points was either by stage line or steamboat. Captain Moran's "Firefly" and Captain Whitmore's "New Star" were the first regular steamboats serving San Jose. Later came the "Jenny Lind", crack vessel of the service. This stern-wheeler made regular trips between Alviso and San Francisco. But, on Saturday, April 10, 1853, her boilers exploded, sinking the ship, killing 40, and injuring 20 seriously. Some important men were among the victims.

This put a serious crimp in the steamboat business, and most preferred the stage after that.

Stages left Clay and Kearny streets at eight o'clock each morning for San Jose, and from San Jose's Mansion House at seven a.m. daily. Fare between the two cities in 1854 was six dollars. At the start of the stage line it had been 32 dollars, but was cut to compete with the steamboats.

There were stops along the line to change horses and to allow the passengers time to eat and stretch themselves. One of the main stops was the Mountain View House, built and owned by S. P. Taylor, a man who came west across the plains in 1850.

CLASS II - HISTORICAL LANDMARKS
THE OLD MOUNTAIN VIEW HOUSE
(continued)

The Mountain View House was a two story wooden structure with a porch all along the front, where men sat tilted back in chairs with their feet against the railing. It stood on the northwestern corner of El Camino Real (U.S. 101) and the Mountain View-Alviso road, about 12 miles from San Jose. Old Mountain View was located around this spot until the railway came through and forced it to move.

In its prime the hotel was a meeting place for the settlers for miles around and a favorite stopping place for travelers and drivers of freight trains. George Taylor, son of the owner, still lives within 500 feet of the old hotel site. An old man, he spends his time gardening and talking about the excellent grouse, quail, pigeon, and wild duck shooting that existed around Old Mountain View before the land was all taken up with orchards. Automobiles now whizz by his house at 50 miles an hour, where the stage coaches used to rumble by at a top speed of about eight miles an hour.

CONSULTANT:

George Taylor, Mountain View

Federal Writers' Projects
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Helen Jarret

April 6, 1936

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CLASS II - HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

THE ALAMEDA WILLOWS

On the wide Alameda (Highway 101), connecting San Jose and Santa Clara, three willow trees stand, - living monuments of the time when the Crown of Spain ruled California. Two of these willows stand on the east side of The Alameda north of University street in San Jose. The third is on the same side of the street in the next block toward Santa Clara. All three are marked with plaques. They are the lone remaining trees of four lanes of willows which once marked the highroad from Mission Santa Clara to the Pueblo of San Jose de Guadalupe. Planted in 1799 by the famous Franciscan {Father Magin Catala}, the trees looked down on religious processions, wedding celebrations, mustang races, and Sunday promenades of people dressed in their "holiday best". The Mission then stood on its second site, at the corner of the present Franklin and Campbell streets.

Under the direction of the Indian Chief (Marcello), Mission Indians cut the willow shoots for the trees on the Guadalupe river, and packed them across the fields on their backs to the site of the road.

At one time dove cotes were kept in the branches of the trees. On festival days or religious holidays the doves were loosed in front of the processions, with trailing ribbons fastened to their feet. Little girls threw wild-flowers on the ground along the whole length of the passage.

CLASS II - HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

THE ALAMEDA WILLOWS
(continued)

Later, in 1868, a horse-car service connecting Santa Clara and San Jose rumbled by the trees. But, with the encroachment of American civilization the trees began to disappear. A great many were cut down by settlers for firewood. Others were torn out to make room for widening the road. A new electric street car line accounted for more. The trees that stand, with their patches and evidence of tree surgery, show the ravages the old Mission way withstood.

THE EUCALYPTUS GIANT

A giant tree, California's largest Eucalyptus, (by University of California measurement) stands on the west side of State Highway 17 where it crosses the Coyote river on the route from San Jose to Oakland.

This tree, shaped like a gargantuan dust-mop. is almost 70 years old; its trunk nine feet in diameter. Its bark is unusually thick and coarse as a result of constant irrigation from the river waters.

SOURCES:

Santa Clara County Agricultural Commission

CONSULTANT:

Mr. L. R. Cody, Agricultural Commissioner

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District 9

March 24, 1936

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CLASS II - HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

SITE OF CALIFORNIA'S FIRST CAPITOL BUILDING

Marble pedestal with inscribed bronze tablet marks site California's first state capitol building. Located City Hall Park, corner Market and San Antonio streets, San Jose. California's first legislature assembled here in December 1849. San Jose was seat of government from 1849 to 1851. Original capitol building stood where Bigley's garage is now located opposite tablet. Was two-story adobe structure, with balcony and verandah, built early in 1849 as a hotel by Sainsevain and Z. Rochon. Purchase price of 34,000 dollars made up by 19 of town's leading men. Peter Burnett of San Jose was first governor of state.

* * *

The first American legislature of the state convened in San Jose December 15, 1849. Heavy rains had made roads into swamps. Only six senators were there the first day. They had struggled over miry roads on horseback. The 60 x 40 State Hall was described as an unfinished box. The ground floor held a 40 x 20 Senate chamber and three adjoining rooms for committees and the Secretary of State. The large room on the second floor was for the Assembly. Kelly ("Excursion to California") says of the Assembly Hall: "The floor was covered with a number of little carpets of various shapes and patterns, looking as if every member contributed a patch to make up the robe, the idea of antiquity being assisted by the threadbare state of the hall".

The State House burned April 29, 1853, after the capital had been established in Sacramento.

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CLASS II - HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

- JEFFERSON SCHOOL SITE 1857 -

Jefferson School operated continuously from 1857 when it was built until late in the 1920's when the building was torn down. Site is on north side of Kifer road (which parallels Bayshore highway and 101 highway leading into Santa Clara) where it crosses Campbell creek. An old water tank stands there now, with orchards all around. Jefferson school was one of the original county schools and kept going longer than any of the rest.

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April 15, 1936

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CLASS II - HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

- SPANISH HOSPICE AT SAN MATEO -

The Spanish Hospice was a long adobe building with a tile roof, built late in the eighteenth century as a half-way house between the Mission Dolores and the Mission Santa Clara. Here Franciscan fathers, Spanish officials, soldiers, plodding between the two missions, could break their journey.

Its site was on the north bank of the San Mateo Creek where it crosses El Camino Real (U.S. 101) opposite Mills Hospital. Nothing is left on the spot today for the hospice was totally ruined in the earthquake of 1868. Original tiles from its roof, together with other ancient tiles, are said to be on the present railway station at Burlingame.

In 1830 the hospice was standing whole and unchanged. It was described in that year by a traveler named Don Alfredo Robinson. But in 1849 Bayard Taylor spoke of it in his book of California travels as already a ruin.

CONSULTANT:

Roscoe D. Wyatt, Chamber of Commerce, Redwood City

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LANDMARKS (Historical)

LICK'S MILL

Old ranch house of James Lick and ruins of his mill on Guadalupe river four miles north of San Jose along Alviso road (turn at Montague road). Ruins on grounds now occupied by a distillery whose superintendent lives in Lick's old house. There is an old mill pond and part of original mill race. Original mill has burned down but several later frame buildings standing. Mill built by James Lick in 1855 on property he bought which was part of Spanish Rancho Ricon de los Esteros. In its day mill regarded as one of the wonders of the region. Lick built it of the most expensive materials obtainable short of pure gold and silver. Its interior was panelled in mahogany inlaid with rare woods, like the de luxe salon of a trans-atlantic liner. Machinery was best produced at the time. Flour ground was highest quality on the coast but never commercially successful. Old Lick home is wood painted white surrounded by lawns, gardens.